United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/105

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
4 December 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Legion of Good Will, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20228 (E) 051218

Please recycle

Statement

How can we build social protection systems that are gender-responsive without reinforcing gender stereotypes? This is the central issue of our statement to the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). We, from the Legião da Boa Vontade (LBV)/Legion of Good Will (LGW), present our experience in addressing concrete and cultural obstacles to women's empowerment, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable population.

We are a network of organizations located in Latin America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay), North America (United States), and Europe (Portugal) that operates in more than 100 cities. We support over 15 million services and benefits free of charge to low-income families through 95 educational and social assistance centres. Our Organization was founded in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) on January 1, 1950 (World Peace and Universal Brotherhood Day), by the late radio broadcaster Alziro Zarur (1914–1979), and is presided over by José de Paiva Netto, a journalist, writer, and educator.

This statement is presented in four subheads: (I) Links between social protection and gender equality; (II) Provision of care services for families and children; (III) Social assistance programs and empowerment of women; and (IV) Promotion of Ecumenical and Global Citizenship.

I. Links between social protection and gender equality

In September 2018, the UN Women convened in Glen Cove (New York State, USA) the Expert Group Meeting in preparation for this year's session and discussed the need to redesign social protection systems that do not meet the demands of the female population. After all, the "World Employment and Social Outlook — Trends 2015," a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), revealed that even when there is economic growth in a country gender inequality generally remains unchanged.

Brazil, where our largest operation is undertaken, has policies aimed at reducing the gender gap. The "Human Rights of Women" report, published by the United Nations in Brazil in July 2018, highlighted the fact that women have priority in the main national cash transfer and affordable housing programs. However, even if we consider the period when the Brazilian economy grew the most in the last decade, racial and gender inequality in the world of work persisted and strongly affected the female and black population.

What explains this paradox? Several academic studies in the country have pointed out that, even though the policies that have been adopted are necessary, they end up legitimizing the stereotypes that perpetuate this inequality. To a certain extent, they reinforce the idea that it is a women's role to care for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities in the family. This unpaid work impairs women's insertion into the labour market on an equal footing with men.

This is why we emphasize the importance of the debate about the need to implement measures that benefit women who decide to dedicate themselves fully to the family, such as establishing pension systems that recognize this often "invisible" work that they carry out; combating discrimination in the workplace; guaranteeing fair payment for domestic workers, etc.

II. Provision of care services for family and children

We consider the provision of family and child care services to be a priority. Our centres are dedicated to expanding them, thus encouraging women to lead a productive life.

We currently run nine schools that offer early childhood education to children living in poverty in South America and we are building one in the United States. According to the "Education at a Glance 2018" report, which was published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), although the investment in day care centres and kindergartens has increased in recent years in Latin America, it is still low when compared to more developed countries.

Brazil, for example, increased the amount spent in this area from 0.4 per cent to 0.7 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 2010 and 2015. Even so, among children aged 0–3 years old — who make up 20 per cent of Brazilian households with the lowest income — one-third (33.9 per cent) do not go to school because there are no places for them or there is no day care centre close to their homes. In the 20 per cent of households with the highest income, on the other hand, only 6.9 per cent of the children are affected.

We also provide social assistance services and programs for children and adolescents at social risk in almost 70 cities in Brazil (according to UNICEF, 61 per cent of the Brazilian population under the age of 18 live in poverty — a total of 32 million people). This ensures some peace of mind to thousands of mothers who are afraid of their children falling victims to grooming by criminal organizations. After all, only 15.3 per cent of public-school students study full-time, while half of the Brazilian population feels the presence of organized crime or criminal factions in their neighbourhood, according to a survey by the Brazilian Public Security Forum that was conducted by the Datafolha Institute in 2017.

The aging of the population is also another challenge. According to projections by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in around two decades' time the elderly will make up a quarter of the Brazilian population and outnumber children and adolescents up to 14 years old. For this age group (women account for 55 per cent) we have developed social assistance actions in 40 cities, with a particular focus on socialization and the strengthening of ties.

For the elderly who are unable to take care of themselves or who do not have a family member looking after them, we have three homes in which they can live in. There are also senior citizens who only attend these facilities during the day, while their relatives are at work. Most of the people who look after the sick or dependent elderly people in Brazil are generally elderly women who come from the same family and are not paid to do so.

It is worth mentioning that our work is almost entirely privately funded, with donations being collected through a well-established fundraising structure. Most of the donors, employees, and beneficiaries of the Organization are women. This is a trait of the Legion of Good Will since its origins, dating back to the end of the 1940s.

Along with the work carried out, we also find it necessary to face up, in the cultural field, to what our President, Paiva Netto, defines as "the obstacles offered by a chauvinist male culture," which we do mainly through our social assistance programs and by training people for the job market (item III). We also promote debates about this topic in our schools and in our means of social communication, the goal being to alert people to the importance of fostering global citizenship (IV).

III. Social assistance programs and empowerment of women

Before being assisted by our services and social assistance programs, each woman is interviewed so we can identify the hardships they experience, particularly those gender-related. Based on the information gathered, our team, comprised of social workers, phycologists, and educators, draws up a plan in order to carry out specific interventions that help overcome risky situations and prevent violation of rights.

In all planned activities/workshops, even those aimed at families with unborn or new-born children, there is no division or distinction by sex. Everyone can take part and decide at various times what activities they would like to be involved in according to their own preferences. This opportunity helps break down gender stereotypes, expands the universe of possibilities for girls, and promotes equality, both in the domestic life and in the world of work.

Girls and adolescents are also more likely to be excluded from social participation and the appropriation of public spaces; they commonly spend more time doing household chores or playing games that reinforce socially pre-established gender roles. In our centres, however, they are able to expand their experiences by way of the Children: the Future in the Present! Youth: the Future in the Present!, and Good Will Apprentice programs. They provide a healthy environment for girls and boys to socialize and prevent girls from becoming victims of domestic child labour, which is considered one of the worst forms of child exploitation.

We also work directly with immigrants and refugees, valuing their knowledge and culture, promoting their integration, and helping them face up to situations of isolation and discrimination that primarily affect women. We also train young people and adults for the job market helping them to provide for themselves, thus increasing their participation in the productive world. Above all, we teach women who benefit from our programs and social assistance services about their rights and their responsibilities, and we strengthen their autonomy and self-image.

IV. Promotion of Ecumenical and Global Citizenship

Finally, facing up to "the obstacles offered by a chauvinist male culture" begins by first promoting an effective change in one's ideas and values. Our mission, as defined by educator Paiva Netto in our statutes, is to awaken Ecumenical Citizens, in other words, Planetary Citizens. To achieve this, we promote dialogue on gender equality in our schools — which have their own transversal and interdisciplinary curriculum that combines teaching content with universal values — and in our media, which include 23 radio stations, one national TV network, and several channels on digital platforms.

Our directive is to highlight female leadership in the many sectors of society and in the various areas of human knowledge, from Science and Economics (where historically, but even today, the actions of women have frequently been overshadowed) to Religion, in which we exalt those who have been eternalized in the Sacred Texts, but not always duly recognized. Educator Paiva Netto argues that in order to build a world worthy of Jesus, Hypatia, Gandhi, Wangari Maathai, the Holy Mary, Buddha, Helen Keller, Anne Sullivan, Marie Curie, and Malala Yousafzai — a world for which they and so many other women and men have fought and keep fighting for — each person should be respected for his or her singularity: "Societies that depress them [Wome] do it to themselves. An enlightened Woman makes the family bond strong and a grand, moral, respected, and united community."

"We can find their example of courage in the Gospel of Christ according to John 19:25. This passage reports the support Jesus received from women who were solely

accompanied by the Beloved Disciple [John] at the moment He was to be crucified: 'Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.'

These true heroines, in the depth of pain, did not abandon Him, but firmly remained by His side in a demonstration of outstanding bravery.

No social, political, and/or religious movement can decisively progress without having the support of women, both in public and private spheres. History is proof of that.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/106

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by International HIV/AIDS Alliance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20230 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

The !nternational HIV/AIDS Alliance (the Alliance) is an innovative global partnership of 34 nationally based, independent civil society organisations (Linking Organisations) and implementing partners, working together to mobilise communities against HIV and AIDS. We are united in one mission: supporting community action on HIV, health and human rights to end AIDS.

Introduction

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance welcomes the priority theme of the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women "Social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls".

Adolescent girls and young women, women living with and most affected by HIV, face significant barriers accessing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services, including HIV prevention, treatment and care services.

Gender inequality manifests itself in harmful gender norms, gender-based violence (GBV) and in women's lack of access to and control of economic resources. This restricts women's and girls' ability to make decisions related to their sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and their access to sexual and reproductive health and other health services. Intimate partner violence and limited sexual decision making, forced or coerced sexual debut, poverty, limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and cultural taboos all reduce women's control over when, how and with whom they have sex — and therefore their ability to protect themselves from HIV and other sexual and reproductive health problems.

Stigma and discrimination related to gender, age, sexuality, gender identity and HIV status also present barriers to women and girls accessing sexual and reproductive health services. The legal environment can create further obstacles to women and girls accessing services, especially when sex work, drug use, same-sex behaviour and transmission of HIV are criminalised, and when there are legal barriers and age restrictions to accessing services.

Gender-based violence can increase women's and girls' vulnerability to HIV acquisition and act as a barrier for accessing health and other services, utilisation of and adherence to treatment regimens, and retention in care. An intersectional approach recognising women's multiple and overlapping identities and circumstances is useful in addressing different forms and sites of violence. (International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Gender transformative HIV programming: Identifying and meeting the needs of women and girls in all their diversity., 2018, **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**).

When implemented correctly, social protection schemes can help reduce gender and income inequalities, gender-based violence and social exclusion. They also make it easier for people to access HIV and other health services, and can help reduce the social and economic impact of HIV on households and individuals.

Cash transfers have also been shown to have an impact on HIV acquisition and forward transmission (Taaffee, J., Cheikh, N., and Wilson, D., The use of cash transfers for HIV prevention — are we there yet? African Journal of AIDS Research, 2016. 15(1): 17–25). Some 130 countries have at least one unconditional cash transfer programme, including 40 out of 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Bastagli, F., et a, Cash transfers: what does the evidence say? A rigorous review of programme impact

and of the role of design and implementation features. Overseas Development Institute, 2016)

A set of studies, including a randomised trial in Malawi, a cluster randomised trial in Kenya and two propensity matched studies of South Africa's national social protection programme, demonstrate that cash transfers can reduce HIV-related risk behaviour among adolescents, especially girls (UNICEF and Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI). Social Protection Programmes Contribute to HIV Prevention. 2015. https://transfer.cpc.unc.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/SocialProtectionHIVBrief_Jan2015.pdf

The programme in Zomba, Malawi (Fritz, K and Heise, L (2018) 'A moment of convergence: STRIVE and the Sustainable Development Goals' STRIVE Technical Brief. http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/resources/technical-brief-moment-convergence-strive-and-sustainable-development-goals) gave small monthly stipends to the households of adolescent girls and to young girls directly, to see if it would affect their school attendance and HIV risk. The Malawi trial demonstrates that in addition to reducing HIV risk and school drop-out rates, cash transfers can have positive effects on a range of other development outcomes, including reductions in early marriage and teen pregnancy.

Social protection schemes as outlined above, diminish the risk of HIV infection and increase adherence to HIV treatment, making people and communities more resilient to the impacts of the epidemic.

Recommendations

To increase social protection for women and girls living with and most affected by HIV, increase access to HIV and sexual and reproductive health services, and ensure sustainable infrastructures to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance calls for Member States to:

Adopt a person-centred approach to health, which builds individuals' agency to claim and realise their sexual and reproductive rights to make decisions about who they have sexual relationships with; to live their lives free of sexuality related stigma and discrimination; to enjoy pleasurable sexual relationships free of coercion and violence; to choose whether and when to marry and have children; and to make their own reproductive decisions, including having a safe abortion. This involves empowering individuals and communities to know their rights and adopt positive health seeking behaviours.

Develop and implement age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), including information on HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights, provided in and out of safe school settings. A comprehensive sexuality education curriculum should be developed between ministries of health and education that take a sex-positive approach and include information on pregnancy and contraception, HIV and STI acquisition and management, positive health dignity and prevention, sexual orientation and gender identity, gender-based violence, and harmful gender norms. Take steps to ensure schools are safe settings for girls and young women, where they feel able to access and discuss information related to their sexual and reproductive health.

Develop and implement a comprehensive package of integrated HIV- sexual and reproductive health services, including a full range of contraceptive and family planning commodities, emergency contraception, access to safe abortion and post abortion care, comprehensive post-rape/violence care, sexually transmitted infection (STI) diagnosis and management, and psycho-social adherence support for people living with HIV. We ask that healthcare and community and support workers are

supported to deliver knowledgeable and non-judgemental services to women in all of their diversity, including the most marginalised, through client-centred, tailored and friendly services. Youth-friendly corners and employing peer to peer strategies to reach most affected populations should be employed both at the clinic level and in the community.

Recognise unpaid HIV care burden and ensure that women and girls in unpaid HIV care are compensated and protected. Strengthen health systems so that less of this burden falls to women and girls, augmenting their ability to engage in remunerated employment, or other social, educational or political activities.

Review and revise policies and legal barriers, so that they uphold the human and health rights of people living with and most affected by HIV. This includes the decriminalisation of sex work, drug use, same sex relationships and HIV exposure or transmission; and reform of laws that prevent the free movement or residence of persons living with HIV, laws that prohibit access to safe abortion and post abortion care, and laws that prevent young people from accessing services, commodities or information that uphold their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Resource and invest in community-based organisations and networks to promote community mobilisation, and leadership and mentorship strategies to create demand for services; to promote linkages from prevention to care; and challenge harmful gender norms, stereotypes and practices. These include child, forced or early marriage, female genital mutilation, 'corrective rape', transphobia, and violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and HIV status (actual or perceived), violence against sex workers including by police, and all other forms of violence against women and girls. Existing laws to protect women and girls from these abuses must be properly implemented and monitored using community accountability tools. Social and judicial systems must be strengthened to create an environment where women and girls feel safe to report abuse. Men and boys, as well as community leadership at all levels, must be engaged to support efforts to change harmful social norms which put limitations on women's and girls' opportunities.

Ensure implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals fully integrates and addresses HIV. Especially Goal 1, target 1.3 in relation to social protection systems, Goal 4, target 4.7 on gender equality and literacy, Goal 5, target 5.2 on gender-based violence, and 5.6 on access to sexual and reproductive health, Goal 10, target 10.4 on social protection and Goal 1, target 16.2 on ending abuse and violence, as well as target 16a on preventing violence.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/107

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by International Women's Health Coalition, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20231 (E) 141218

Please recycle

Statement

In order to fulfil women's human rights, governments must invest in gender-inclusive social protection systems, quality public services, including a robust public health system, and sustainable infrastructure. A quality public health system must include comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care services in the context of a legal and policy environment that respects, protects, and fulfils the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls.

Governments around the world still face stark challenges in fulfilling the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls, including legal and policy frameworks that fail to protect their rights, as well as financial and other barriers access to quality health services. It is vital that governments fully commit to overcoming these barriers, adopt a broad and holistic approach towards women and girls' health, ensure that universal health coverage schemes include a comprehensive package of sexual and reproductive health care services, and invest in gender-sensitive infrastructure and public services. In particular, governments must take into consideration the particular challenges faced by the most marginalized and hard-to-reach groups.

Sustainable infrastructure and public services linkages with sexual and reproductive rights

Inaccessible infrastructure and public services impede the fulfilment of women and girls' sexual and reproductive rights. For example, inadequate clean water and sanitation leads to avoidable contamination, disease, and death, as well as poses obstacles to dignified menstrual health management. In addition to harming their overall health, and sexual and reproductive health especially, lack of access to basic infrastructure may prevent girls from continuing their education or employment, as well as substantially increase the burden of unpaid care work on women and girls, for example, in the case of women and girls who spend a considerable amount of time gathering safe drinking water daily.

Limited availability of nearby, well-equipped public health facilities leads to great difficulties in accessing healthcare. The problem can be particularly acute in rural areas where lack of health facilities combined with expensive, unsafe, or non-existent public transportation makes accessing health care harder for rural populations, especially for rural women and girls. In addition, the deficit of skilled and well-trained health workers — estimated at more than 10 million worldwide — reduces the availability of services. Additional barriers to accessing healthcare for women and girls include providers refusing to provide certain services, stigma associated with sexual and reproductive health services, and discrimination faced in health care settings exacerbated by age, disability, ethnicity, class, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, health status, or other characteristics.

The lack of available, accessible, acceptable and quality public health services violates the right to health of women and girls, limits their access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information, and ultimately leads to negative health outcomes.

Gender-inclusive social protection systems, including universal health coverage

Around 55 per cent of the world's population, or 4 billion people, do not receive any kind of social benefit, and almost 40 per cent of people around the world remain without any sort of health protection of insurance. Universal health coverage has the potential to provide financial protection against catastrophic health costs and out-of-pocket expenses, enhance access to and increase the availability of medication and services, and lead to improved health outcomes. However, to truly be universal,

governments must design universal health coverage schemes in ways that address the particular needs of women, adolescents, and marginalized communities.

In particular, universal health coverage schemes must include core sexual and reproductive health services in essential benefits packages, including contraception; safe abortion and post-abortion care; antenatal, safe delivery and postnatal care; prevention and treatment of infertility, reproductive tract infections, sexually transmissible infections, including HIV, and reproductive cancers; and services to address gender-based violence.

Universal health coverage schemes must also provide a level of financial protection sufficient to insulate women and girls against economic hardship. Women consistently experience a higher burden of out-of-pocket costs for health care services than men who have similar levels of insurance coverage, largely due to non-coverage or limits on coverage for sexual and reproductive health services. Even nominal co-pays, common in many insurance programs, may pose a significant barrier if women or adolescents do not have access to or control over cash.

Finally, attention must be paid to make sure that the most marginalized women do not fall through the cracks of universal health coverage due to a lack of autonomy and decision-making power, or lack of information. Women who are employed in the informal sector, women living in poverty, adolescent girls, older women, and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women are often those least able to obtain good quality health insurance.

Without addressing the myriad other barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health care services, universal health coverage schemes will fail no matter how well they are financed or rolled out. These other factors include discriminatory social and cultural norms and practices; laws that criminalize certain services, such as abortion; third party authorization requirements, such as parental or spousal consent; lack of information, education, and decision-making power; and health care workers that refuse to provide care on the basis of conscience. Governments must also address other social determinants of health, such as food and nutrition, security, water and sanitation, and other environmental and occupational factors that can also have specific negative health consequences for women and girls, including for their sexual and reproductive health.

Without addressing these factors, the international community will not meet the Sustainable Development Goals and governments will continue to fail to fulfil the human rights of women and girls. It is paramount, therefore, that commitment towards gender equality and empowerment is not limited to a matter of principle but translates into the effective implementation of specific programs to guarantee the availability of and access to essential services for all women and girls.

Key Recommendations:

Sustainable Infrastructure:

- Guarantee universal access to water and sanitation, including menstrual hygiene management, by incorporating a gender perspective into these programs.
- Invest in sustainable transportation systems, including roads and public and emergency transport to make traveling to health facilities easier, faster, and safer.

Access to Quality Public Health Services:

- Invest in public health systems, including in particular primary health care facilities and health outposts, ensure commodity security, establish referral

networks, and provide emergency transport services to ensure universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information.

- Increase the number of health care workers, particularly community health workers, nurses, midwives, obstetricians and gynaecologists, and primary care physicians, including by providing incentives; training, equipping and establishing supervisory mechanisms to enable health care workers to provide high quality and comprehensive care, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information; develop policies to allow task shifting to lower level health care workers to provide contraceptives, medical abortion, and basic antenatal, delivery, and postnatal care.

- Improve the training of health personnel to eliminate discrimination, disrespect, abuse and other human rights violations in health care settings and to deliver ethical, appropriate, culturally relevant and human rights-based health care services.

Universal Health Coverage:

- Design universal health coverage schemes to address barriers to coverage and coverage gaps faced by women and girls, especially those from marginalized groups.

- Ensure that essential benefits packages for universal health coverage programs include a comprehensive package of sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception; safe abortion and post-abortion care; antenatal, safe delivery and postnatal care; prevention and treatment of infertility, reproductive tract infections, sexually transmissible infections, including HIV, and reproductive cancers; and services to address gender-based violence.

- Create enabling legal and policy frameworks to fulfil women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights and address social norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequality, limit women and girls' autonomy and decision-making power, and limit their access to services.

Engagement with Civil Society:

- Respect the human right to participation by engaging non-governmental organizations and affected communities in all aspects of decision-making, budgeting, policy development, program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the public health system, and promoting participatory governance of health system, including by regulating the private sector.

- Work independently, jointly, and/or with intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, to produce and publish data on health disaggregated by gender, age, residence, disability, indigenous status, and other factors relevant in local contexts, in order to design programs and policies tailored to the specific needs of women and girls.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/108

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20295 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd welcomes the opportunity to make a written statement on the priority theme of the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, reviewing significant policy areas — the provision of social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure — and how these can contribute to the empowerment of girls and women. The theme appears to neglect the globalized reality within which marginalized and discriminated girls and women live, which contributes significantly to keeping in place the systems and structures of gender inequality.

The current global economic system appears to prioritize profit over people's lives and the environment. Patriarchy, racism, and capitalism work together in oppressing and disempowering girls and women. Tax injustice, the privatization of public services and implementation of austerity measures, which negatively impact or remove social protection systems, are counter forces that need to be addressed according to the principles of gender justice, economic justice, and environmental justice. The effects of the exploitative nature of gender inequality, economic and environmental injustice on girls, women, and children are stark. Women and girls are disempowered through the perpetuation of patriarchal power dynamics. These abuses, seen particularly in prostitution, the trafficking of girls, women and children for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, an ever-growing informal economy, and unpaid care work, all serve to reinforce structures of gender inequality and injustice. Until there is a paradigm shift away from these exploitative systems and structures, it will not be possible to usher in a more equitable, human rights-informed global order based on the principles of solidarity, compassion, and concern.

Social protection systems encompass multiple terms including 'social protection', 'social security', 'social protection floors', 'social insurance' and more recently, 'universal social protection'. The international community has long recognized the obligation of States to provide social protection in order to ensure that everyone has their basic needs met and is able to realise all other human rights. Social security was first recognised as a human right 70 years ago in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. In 1952, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 102 on Social Security (Minimum Standards) elaborated basic social security principles and established worldwide-agreed minimum standards for nine branches of social security: medical care, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit, old-age benefit, employment injury benefit, family benefit, maternity benefit, invalidity benefit, and survivors' benefit.

Since then, the right to social security has been enshrined in numerous international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 26) recognising 'for every child the right to benefit from social security, including insurance.' The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women explicitly recognises the equal rights of women to social security 'particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave' (Article 11(1)(e)). More recently, ILO put forward Recommendation 202 on National Floors of Social Protection, which are included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically in Sustainable Development Goals 1.3, 3.8, 5.4, 8.5 and 10.4. Full implementation of ILO Recommendation 202, composed of four basic asks: healthcare for all, income for children (including nutrition, education and services), income security for those of working age who cannot work, and income for elderly persons, would go a long way towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The World Social Protection Report, "Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals 2017–19", indicates that only 45 per cent of the global population is effectively covered by at least one social benefit, while the remaining 55 per cent — 4 billion people — are left unprotected. Within this group, girls and women tend to be quantitatively and qualitatively worse off than men, as they are less likely to be covered or are provided with lesser benefits. The lack of social protection coverage leaves women and girls vulnerable to ill-health, poverty, inequality and social exclusion throughout their life cycles. Failure to provide social protection is a significant obstacle to gender equality, and to economic and social development. Implementation of rights-based social protection systems for all requires strong political will, the drafting of policy and the allocation of substantive budget to translate words into action.

It is to a small segment of the 4 billion people worldwide who do not have access to social protection that the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd extends social protection measures. The 2017 annual report of Good Shepherd International Foundation indicates that 176,000 people benefited from a total of USD 4 million dollars in 19 countries, with a specific focus on girls, women, and children. Where state-supported social protection is non-existent, the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd prioritizes the empowerment of vulnerable girls and women, who experience multidimensional poverty and the systemic violations of their dignity, to implement projects.

Good Shepherd projects are usually initiated at the local level and scaled up when possible. The 'Mission Development Offices' in Asia Pacific and Latin America offer good practices for regional coordination. The Asia Pacific team has worked to implement strategic plans and monitor grants that allow for local Good Shepherd programs to continue implementing social protection services and empowerment programmes, towards community building and social inclusion. The Latin American team has invested greatly in microfinance programs, giving girls and women access to economic security and basic human rights. Working with migrant women near the border of Chile and Bolivia, Good Shepherd Services has offered skills training in craft and food production, business management and entrepreneurship development. The combination of skills training and microfinance loans empowers these women economically to create their own businesses and work towards sustainable incomes.

Two documentary projects — "Maisha", based on the projects in Kolwezi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and "Mahila: A Women's Movement Rising" which shares stories of empowerment in a rural Dalit community in India — provide models of development that could be replicated by governments and civil society. The project in olwezi has created a model to eradicate child labour in mines, rescuing more than 1600 children. Further, the project has built secure communities, empowered women, increased farming and income generation, improved local structures and created safe space for girls, women, and children in a situation where access to public services and infrastructure are very limited or non- existent. Government provision of such services would significantly contribute to the further empowerment of women, girls and the whole community.

The economic justice project in India, begun in 2014, addresses the triple oppression due to gender, caste, and impoverished economic status of the most marginalized women from Dalit and tribal communities living in five rural villages in India. The project helps women achieve economic, social and political empowerment through income generating programs, skills-training and basic human rights education. Becoming empowered to economically sustain themselves and their families through business activities and through social inclusion is indeed a form of social security upholding the right to engage in work with dignity. Public services and

infrastructure to enhance well-being and promote empowerment are necessary for the flourishing of gender justice.

Recommendations:

Enact a just, integrated and sustainable model of development, inclusive of gender, environmental, and economic justice, that puts the interests of disempowered, marginalized and impoverished girls, women and their communities at the centre of policy concerns, ahead of the corporate agenda, and upholds the protection of their human rights.

Establish human rights-based, gender-sensitive Social Protection Floors at the national level as a first step in the creation of Universal Social Protection, in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda, and 'to reach those furthest behind first.'

Express strong political will to reject austerity measures in favour of the implementation of social protection systems financed through progressive taxation, addressing Illicit flows, and the reallocation of military expenditures.

Ensure better access to health care, quality education, skills training, and public services for girls and women.

Enable inclusive, non-tokenistic participation for girls and women at all levels of decision-making including policy design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/109

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Mediators Beyond Borders, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20297 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

On the occasion of the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Mediators Beyond Borders International (MBBI) wishes to highlight the importance of mediation as a tool for women and girls to improve access to justice and public resources, to increase women's participation in governmental and peace-building processes, and to promote opportunities for self-determination and self-protection. Mediators Beyond Borders International supports women's presence at negotiations, capacity-building for mediation and negotiating skills, and the global implementation and use of peace-building and peaceful resolution processes.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 recognizes that women and girls are disproportionately affected by disparities in income, social security and receipt of public services, among other inequities. Mediators Beyond Borders International recognises that while access to income, social security, education, and health care are enshrined in international laws and treaties and many national laws, the processes for accessing or enforcing provision of those services can pose obstacles for many women due to cultural, social, economic or political barriers. These formal legal or political processes tend to use power- or rights-based methods, which often exclude women from the process and result in inequitable outcomes when women are allowed to participate. In the Concept Note issued by the Expert Group Meeting convened by UN Women in New York 13–15 September 2018, the Group states that "Social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure are at the heart of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Without scaling up investments in this area, virtually all of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals — be they social, economic, environmental or political — will remain out of reach." Mediators Beyond Borders International wishes to add that without significant investment in process structures that empower women's effective participation in decision-making and dispute resolution, such Goals may not be fully attainable.

Mediators Beyond Borders International advocates for interest-based dispute resolution and decision-making processes such as mediation to empower women and girls to be included in decisions, and for meaningful and confidential exploration of issues. Such processes provide the possibility of a resolution founded on women's self-identified interests and outcome. Due to the informal nature of mediation and other such processes, such processes are often designed to safely and appropriately support discussion and problem-solving even when experiences such as trauma, power-imbalances, and gender-based violence concerns are present. Mediation can be a parallel, alternative or extra-legal method for addressing women's needs, struggles, and efforts to access services, and to achieve gender equality in private and public life. These processes and structures may provide greater access to resources that may not traditionally be available by legal processes, administrative processes, governmental participation and public resources or in the least, provide an alternative to court-based litigation. For example, a woman participant may prefer to seek redress of gender discrimination complaints in the workplace and in housing by a confidential and informal process, and may seek restitution and the implementation of future non-discriminatory practices. In short, women and girls can have a hand in creating their own justice.

The September 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (The Beijing Platform for Action) deliverable specifically noted alternative structures as a power source for women: "... women have gained access to power through alternative structures, particularly in the non-governmental organization sector. Through non-governmental organizations and grass-roots organizations, women have been able to articulate their interests and concerns and have placed women's issues on the national, regional and international agendas." There are many examples where such

structures (such as mediation) could provide opportunities for expression of interests and concerns. Examples include: a) women" rights to property, income and financial support are often closely linked to their familial or marital ties. Interest-based negotiation relating to marital property, child and spousal support may not be enshrined in the applicable family law, and, in nations where such laws do exist, litigation methods may not be effective to achieve protection for women due to cultural, social, economic or other barriers. Community-based mediation and accessible family mediation (including court-annexed) services often provide an informal and collaborative process where women can participate with negotiation and seek a solution best suited to her particular needs. b) Unionized environments and mediation of administrative complaints can be a source of power for women where local laws may not provide employment protection. Collective bargaining tools, including mediation, can provide opportunities for negotiations where issues affecting women (such as child-care, maternity leave, health benefits, gender and race discrimination, and precarious employment) require a focused, and gender-reflective negotiation methodology.

Human rights are intrinsically linked with rights of self-determination. Mediators Beyond Borders International believes self-determination cannot be achieved unless there is equal representation of gender at high-level negotiations and consultations on national public economic and legislative change, especially relating to issues affecting women, such as sexual and domestic violence, health care, reproductive rights, child care, income equality, indigenous affairs, and educational opportunities for girls. In addition, Mediators Beyond Borders International recognizes the need for more women mediators at international, national and local levels. For women to create local opportunities for learning, collaboration and skills development, there needs to be a localized approach of women-to-women mentorship. Through its International Training Institute (ITI), Mediators Beyond Borders International provides skills-building training that empowers women in leadership roles and provides skills to become more engaged in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and prevention, education and partnerships.

Promoting women as mediators and peacebuilders is both a challenge and an opportunity. In 2009, the United Nations Secretary General issued a report (S/2009/189) on enhancing mediation and its support activities, while describing the need for experienced and knowledgeable mediators and support teams, with women adequately represented. In the report, the Secretary General recommended fostering the gender balance and expertise in senior mediation posts. A UN Women Report entitled "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence" (2012, at 26) concluded that "women's absence in peace processes cannot be explained by their alleged lack of experience in conflict resolution or negotiations. Instead there has been a lack of effort to integrate them in formal peace processes." The United Nations Secretary-General's Seven Point Action Plan on Women and Peacebuilding (A/65/354-S/2010/466 also calls on the United Nations to ensure that technical assistance in conflict resolution processes furthers women's participation as appointed decision makers.

While there is a desire by the United Nations and other stakeholders to include women in mediated forums, there may be a gap between the perceived talent pool and the actual pool of international, national, and local talent available that are highly trained and highly qualified mediators. Mediators Beyond Borders International believes stakeholders must take initiatives to identify, recruit and promote women mediators in all forms of negotiation. In addition, mediators must also take great care to include women's voices in the mediation process.

Mediators Beyond Borders International provides the following recommendations to the 63rd session of the Commission of the Status of Women for consideration:

Establish a national mediation task force to review and assess recommendations to improve women's access to mediation and other services for family law matters, including property division and financial support, and for discrimination, harassment, and other challenges women face in the workplace.

Ensure equal representation of gender at high-level negotiations and consultations on national public economic and legislative change. Representation of gender equity is especially relevant to issues affecting women, such as sexual and domestic violence, health care, reproductive rights, child care, income equality, indigenous affairs, employment, and educational opportunities for girls.

Promote investment in mediation structures at international, national and local levels in order to provide processes and structures for dispute resolution where court-based litigation or arbitration options may be inaccessible to or prohibitive for women.

Encourage trade unions and the private sector to include women's equal participation in collective bargaining and negotiation and to hire women mediators and arbitrators to ensure that women's interests are equally represented and considered.

Support pay equity between women and men in collective bargaining negotiations and support pay equity for women mediators.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/110

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Ohaha Family Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20298 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

Our organization is engaging with Traditional and Religious mechanism to champion the advancement of access to social services to women and Girls, in Nigeria. Nigeria has a human population of 198 Million people, 100 Million Males (50.6 per cent) and 98 Million Females (49.4 per cent), having around 250 ethnic groups and over 500 indigenous languages.

The country is a religiously diverse society, so that traditional and religious systems and institutions are very central to the Nigerian people. Christianity and Islam are the two major religions practiced in Nigeria, with Christians dominating the south and Islam the north although there is still a good number of people in the country still practicing traditional religions. The traditional institutions are usually represented by the title of Emir's, Oba's, Igwe's, Obi's and Chiefs or the traditional title that the community inherited or are given; these leaders are highly revered by the people as custodians of the cultural norms, rights and responsibilities that the people live by, and their interpretation is strongly upheld. The religious leaders and clergies are the custodians of the religious rules and norms and practices, often the people hold their leaders highly as the mouthpiece of the Supreme Being.

Since inception of human habitation and civilization in Nigeria, traditional laws, and practices govern how people live, and interact with each other and access social services. Although these institutions and their leadership systems do not have any formal powers, yet they continue to be highly revered and respected by the people around their circle of influence. Their followers agree to a trans-generational hierarchy and system, which also give more credence to their sovereignty, because they have influence in their sphere of influence.

Culture and tradition are shaping the way people interact through the practice of religion impacting the design of religious places of worship, to accommodate gender disparity. Gender roles are very much engraved in traditional institutions, with gender specific roles and responsibility enshrined in cultural orientation. Say for instance, in orthodox Christianity, males don't seat with females in Churches and interaction is greatly reduced, while in Mosques, females do not pray together with their male counterparts, in some instances, male mosques is designed secluded from female mosques.

Typically, in the Nigeria society, women and girls have access to services as much as the 'societal norms' permit them and the males have higher dominance in the decision and leadership processes, so that a women or girl is often believed to be subjected to the male figure in her life, which could be father, brother and leader. The male counterparts or leaders do often not allow females participate or speak except admitted and permitted.

Traditional practices have been so male dominated that parents with female children only are believed to be weak, and lack strength as male children are believed to provide security for the family, the heir apparent to carry on the family name, thus bridge between generations. Fathers have been ostracized and demeaned for having or providing cover for women and girls, as it is believed in some traditional communities, because women and girls are relegated to domestic roles, and house chores. So that the males are usually favoured in placement, access to the services, and promotion and visibility. There are societies that women ae not allowed to speak in public when their male 'cover' is seated.

In order to ensure that there is improved and equal access to Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, we are recommending the following;

- Identify the traditional and religious leaders in communities practicing male dominance and, inform and educate the males on gender inclusiveness and the critical roles of women and girls while advocating for the advancement, and improvement of the participation of women and girls in such communities.
- Identify the male leaders whose support we can leverage upon to mobilize for the advancement of active participation and involvement of women and girls from the grassroots.
- Include women and girls in designing social services, through design, implementation and monitoring stages.
- Educate women and girls on improved roles in active participation and decision making, by ensuring that they are more available.
- Mobilize more parents and grassroots advocate to ensure that ALL girls receive compulsory primary and secondary education.
- Identify and galvanize support for inclusion and participation of women and girls through the favoured wife of the traditional ruler in community development; this champion could help bring women and girls closer to the seat of power and influence and thus bring about the needed change.
- Channel the power and influence of the women groups in communities to amplify the voice of women and girls.
- Women and girls are most vulnerable in times of disaster and crisis, using the traditional and religious mechanisms to build the resilience of women and girls.
- Increase women participation in community discussions, leaders and elders meeting and in the political ecosystem.
- Let women and girls lead through their male counterparts in traditional societies until women and girls grow in number for inclusive growth and development
- Increase the number of women and girls trained to offer and provide services that are male dominated.
- Build social protection and safety nets for women and girls by women and girls.
- There should be a mandatory 40–50 per cent of women participation as a key component in ALL services that will be offered.
- Member states should be encouraged to at Federal, State and Local Government Level increase women participation and inclusion in decision and policy making by allocated a certain number or quota of participation for women and girls.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/111

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by International Women's Year Liaison Group, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20302 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

The Gender Equality Act for Political Participation of Women of 2018

We proudly announce that the Diet finally passed the Gender Equality Act for Political Participation of Women (Law No. 28 of 2018) on 23 May 2018. It encourages political parties to endeavour to adopt equal number of male and female candidates for all levels of official elections, which should encourage implementation of a voluntary quota system among political parties. This has been the fruit of coordinated efforts of 63 non-governmental organizations) which took six years to persuade all-parties members of the Diet that Japan needs to improve women's representation in political sphere. We have been deeply troubled by World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2017 which ranked Japan as 114 out of 144 countries. She was atrociously behind in political empowerment (123) as well as in economic participation and opportunity (114), although the latest statistical update of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index ranking placed Japan at 19. The huge difference in these ranking apparently is due to the fact that latter does not take into consideration the lack of women's representation in political sphere and in leadership positions in general. We sincerely hope this Act will be the real beginning of the empowerment of women and girls. Civil society is providing encouragement in forms of knowledge and other useful resources so that there will be many more women interested in entering politics as well as pushing for a reasonable working hours and other humane arrangements for politicians in general.

Social Protection Systems for Gender Equality

We consider that a very strong protection of legal marriage and of the status of spouses (wives in reality) in succession law, social securities and tax policies (which should function as social protection systems) prevent many women from overcoming gender-specific ways of life, and discourage women in general from being autonomous and independent, thus disempowering them. It is important to have functioning social protection systems, but it is crucial that they are not based on fossilized gender stereotypes.

The very strong protection of legal marriage and of the status of spouses, as provided for in Japan, encourages (1) young women to choose home-makers as their most advantageous and preferable way of living, and to abandon their education, training and works; (2) women with children to choose part-time instead of full-time and well-paid works for their belief that they are to shoulder most of family responsibility, and to forfeit their entitlement to better pension plans and superannuation; (3) women thinking of divorce at a later stage of life to stay married even when their spouses are having affairs or when they fear domestic violence for themselves or for children, especially when they realize that their pension and their share of marriage property would be reasonably sufficient only when they are widowed.

In 1946, women exercised their first political rights. In 1947, women became entitled to exercise legal rights as person. Since 1980, the rule of succession was amended to "enhance women's rights" which actually was to fortify the status of spouses, not of women's rights.

To be more precise, in 1947, when the Diet reviewed the Civil Code on Family Relationship and Succession to reflect the newly guaranteed legal status of women by the Constitution of 1947, the law (Law Nos. 22 and 222 of 1047) provided that the surviving spouse, for the first time, is to inherit a part, typically, one third, of the estate of the deceased. In 1980 revision of the Civil Code (Law No. 51 of 1980), that share was increased, typically to one half. In 2018, the Civil Code on Succession was

again revised to benefit a surviving spouse (Law No. 72 of 2018) by introducing a peculiar right similar to remainder for life for their communal residential property and preventing reversion of a residential property from the deceased's estate if the deceased made a gift prior to death to the spouse of twenty years or more. There is a very strong incentive to keep legal marriage to continue regardless of whether there is a breakdown in its relationship. Spouses with little or no independent income would have no choice but to remain in the relationship because of financial disadvantages and deprivation that divorce will surely bring. Thus, the law of succession, although superficially gender-neutral, prevents women and girls from exercising autonomous choices.

Media also project a very conscripted and convoluted image of women and are prone to provide misleading information. A typical household in Japan is portrayed as a nuclear family with a married couple and child(ren), but according to National Survey of Households 2017, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, only 29.5 per cent of households are nuclear families. Of all the households with child(ren), 70.8 per cent of mothers of the youngest child are working: 34.9 per cent are working full-time and 52.3 per cent are part-time workers. Yet, mothers with child(ren) are most often depicted as stay-at-home moms when, in fact, only 29.2 per cent are. About a quarter (24.7 per cent) of mother's work, continuously it appears, full time whereas the percentages of part-time working mothers fluctuate between 10 per cent and 50 per cent depending on the age brackets of child(ren). Based on media information, women quite often believe that it would increase family income if they only earn so little that their tiny earnings qualify themselves as their spouses' dependents instead of themselves earning significant incomes because that would push the family income into much higher tax brackets. In fact, married couples are taxed independently of each other. Therefore, the total income will be taxed less if both adults have incomes compared to the case where one adult becomes financially dependent upon the other even when the latter's total income is equivalent to the sum of former two adults.

It is not just motherhood and childcare but also care to other members of closely related and not so close family, that discourages daughters, daughters-in-law and wives to continue working or encourages these people to retire early to look after and care for the elderly or for those who need someone to look after and care for. In short, the rapidly aging society and Japanese-style welfare expects women within family, who earn less, to leave workforce to shoulder the actual undertakings. The system is supported by ideas that people should not expect the State and public entities to support individuals in need, that family members are to care other family members and should bear the burden as moral obligation, both financially and physically, and that the effective care and efficient distribution of necessary resources would be better met by competitive market.

For whatever reasons, women are disempowered when they feel they do not have the choice but to perform their gender roles a have been expected, when they lose control of their financial resources and become dependent, and when they are deprived of their chance to contribute to society. By leaving labour market, forfeiting significant income of their own and becoming dependents to their spouses (and because dependent spouses are exempted from contributing to their own pension plans), a large percentage of their pensions also becomes dependent upon the spouses' pension plans.

Tax policy which allows spouses to be dependent, pension system which exempts dependent spouses from contributing to their own pension funds, social welfare system which expects family members to support other family members are all founded on the belief that these systems will help women by supporting their dependency when it is necessary, or inevitable. We do not deny all systems started

with good intentions but many of the presumptions outlived their usefulness; it is now time to overhaul the structure and encourage women and girls to choose their lives without forcing them to perform any of the socially defined gender roles. Since we succeeded in enacting the Gender Equality Act for Political Participation of Women of 2018, we can be optimistic in restructuring our tax and social welfare policies.

This year, several medical schools admitted that they had treated women differently by admitting male applicants with lower grades. The president and the dean of one school explained its decision by stating an unsubstantiated allegation that female medical students leave school without becoming doctors, unwilling to qualify and practice. Gender bias persists but we hope this is an opportunity to improve the working environment of medical staff.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/112

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Asociacion HazteOir.org a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20306 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

Since the founding of this body, the United Nations has expressed its commitment to the advancement of women and girls all over the world. While great strides have been made in this area, the most vital of rights, the right to life is commonly forgotten and left out of this dialogue. Every human being deserves and needs, first, to have their right to life acknowledged and respected.

Alongside the right to life, we must continue to forge forward with the ever so important access to basic needs: food, clean water, education, housing, gainful employment, healthcare, safety, and security. These are the topics that must remain the priority of this body. Governments and this body can do and should do more.

Asociación HazteOir.org is shocked and appalled that today there are still countries where woman and girls are valued less than those of the opposite sex. In these countries, unborn baby girls are often denied their fundamental right to life, only because of their sex. These countries believe that women and girls are less worthy of living than men. And, sex-selective-abortion and infanticide, or access to reproductive health or rights, are portrayed as solutions rather than someone giving birth to a baby girl. The United Nations, regional working groups, Member States, NGOs, and individuals can do more and should do more to prevent this injustice. As pioneers for human rights, we can start by acknowledging our most fundamental human right: the right to life. Women and girls around the world deserve this action from us.

As we recognize the basic right to life for women and girls, we need to continue our efforts for solutions to guarantee equal access to the basic needs described above.

The 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women focused on Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. Among those challenges, Asociación HazteOir.org finds that access to education and infrastructure remain among achievable priorities, especially for women and girls from poorer and rural areas. There is still much more to do.

In a negative self-feeding cycle, rural women and their families have fewer opportunities to escape poverty and are more likely to receive inferior education and health-care. Women living in rural zones and far from main public services have an increased percentage of school drop-out, lower salaries, lack of access to the labour market, and implications for their physical and mental health.

Asociación HazteOir.org believes that all women and girls should have access to a quality education so that they can contribute to the advancement of their family, community, country, and region. The lack of education affects the lives of their children and those in their community. Global data shows that the under-five mortality rate decreases as mothers' education improves.

Equal opportunity and access to education for women and girls should be promoted at all level, including but not limited to early childhood, primary, secondary and post-secondary education, non-formal education, adult literacy education, skills development, and vocational training.

In developing countries, only half of pregnant women receive prenatal care at least once during pregnancy. Because of limited access, rural women are dying during pregnancy from failure to reach health facilities. The lack of access to emergency obstetric care remains a scandal for the world. More can and should be done.

Unfortunately, some in the international community use the needs of women and girls as an excuse and tactic to promote controversial social and health policies, both in the education and the health fields.

In actions implementing public policy, especially goals and targets for countries, we must consider different cultural diversities and respecting national policy.

The United Nations, its agencies and Member States need to be careful not to endorse or promote a broad approach to sexual and reproductive health, including the so-called comprehensive sexuality education, that seems to have more to do with ideology and changing social norms about family life and sexuality than it has with improving health outcomes for women and girls.

Investments to reduce maternal and child mortality should focus on making pregnancy and childbirth safer for mothers and their unborn children. The Millennium Development Goals tried to focus on maternal health outcomes and targeted interventions to prevent maternal deaths. Sadly, the 2030 Agenda seems to have preferred a focus on maternal health to emphasize fertility reduction once again.

On occasion, it may be thought that the use of contraceptives and even to abort unborn children are the answers to difficulties with the health of the mother. But often, these situations are only aggravated by poverty or living far from access to health facilities or proper care.

The international community will start seeing real results when it reprioritizes investments into maternal, pre and new-born health. Women do not need to die while giving birth, there are many health programs on improving the conditions of hospitals, protocols to follow up with pregnant women and the development of the unborn babies, as well as post-partum care.

While many offer abortion and contraception as the only solution, please note that poor or rural women do not die from giving birth to unwanted children, but children who are very much desired.

A legitimate question would be what could happen if the resources invested in promoting a culture of contraception and abortion were used to support the right to life and the well-being of pregnant mothers, unborn and already born children. Resources could be reinvested in the basics, building new and improving existing medical facilities. More doctors and skilled birth attendants could be trained. Better roads and transportation systems could be constructed to ensure rural and poor women and girls have access to medical facilities and maternal health-care.

At previous Commission on the Status of Women session negotiations, it has been difficult for Member States to find an agreement on agreed conclusions. Quite often, the Commission's agreed conclusions have proposed focusing on issues that went beyond international consensus, while trying to promote controversial policies that have not even demonstrated to be a health improvement.

Some groups promote abortion as the solution for women and girls. Inside the United Nations system, there are calls from actors such as working groups, treaty monitoring bodies, mandate holders or employees, quite often outside of their respective mandates, for States to repeal laws that protect the life of children in the womb. Those calls quite often are based on the false premise that women's health necessarily improves where abortion is permitted. Data on Global maternal mortality does not support this. There is no positive correlation between permissive abortion laws and maternal health. What the data shows is that maternal deaths from all causes, including from abortion, are reduced when maternal health overall improves.

At the same time, violations of human rights such as abortion, forced sterilization, forced abortion, sex-selective abortion and coercive and discriminatory family planning policies often go unnoticed and the same countries, working groups, treaty monitoring bodies, and mandate holders are silent. Abortion continues to claim girl victims, and disproportionately because of sex-selection. In regions of the world

where male preference is cultivated, girls are aborted before they even have a chance to take their first breath. Much more can and should be done.

The world's poor and rural areas are easy targets for the abortion industry. These women and girls deserve to be protected. They need Member States to denounce and punish these crimes, and to work together to re-create a world where women's and their children's lives are treasured, and their bodies are respected always, everywhere, and by everyone. Much more can and should be done.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/113

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by FEMM Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20307 (E) 211218

Please recycle

Statement

The FEMM Foundation is a knowledge-based health program for women inspired by women's right to be informed participants in their own healthcare and to make voluntary decisions based on options, information, and understanding. The Foundation is dedicated to health education, medical research, and improving reproductive health care to advance women's health. Women and girls often do not receive quality healthcare; FEMM is dedicated to addressing these health disparities to help truly empower women and girls and achieve gender equality.

In adopting the Sustainable Development Goals, Member States pledged to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages" (Goal 3), noting in particular reproductive health (Target 3.7). International law recognizes a right to the "highest attainable standard of health." This is important not only as a right, but as an enabler of participation in the social and economic life of one's community, which are key to realizing gender equality and women and girls' empowerment. This requires sustainable health infrastructures and services which address women's unique health needs, including their reproductive health. This in turn will empower women and girls and promote their equal participation in all spheres of life.

Women and girls comprise approximately half the population of the world but remain more vulnerable to health problems due to both biological and social reasons. Women and girls in rural areas often have access to fewer doctors and clinics and may not have the financial ability to get the care they need. Health can help or hinder women and girls' education and participation in the social and economic life of their communities, which are essential aspects of achieving gender equality and empowerment. By implementing good healthcare in rural communities for women and girls, we can ensure that they are able to develop their gifts and contribute to their families, jobs, and societies.

Understanding one's own body is essential for good health and empowers women and girls to be informed participants in their care. Women also often accept as normal symptoms such as irregular bleeding, pain, depression, mood swings, and weight gain, nor realizing that these are often signs of underlying hormonal imbalances and abnormalities. Even when women do seek medical care, most health care providers and programs struggle to diagnose them and often can only treat the symptoms. Women and girls in rural communities may not be able to reach a specialist who can help them.

These underlying conditions can affect women and girls' long-term overall health, sometimes irreversibly. They can also affect women and girls' ability to complete their education, engage in work, and plan their families. These may interfere with women and girls' ability to participate in all areas of their lives. Poor health hurts gender equality by undermining women and girls' ability to realize their potential and drive development in their communities. Women and girls who have untreated medical conditions can be empowered through both knowledge and good medical treatment.

A woman who understands how her body works can monitor her health and seek help when needed. Even women who have not completed schooling can learn to monitor their signs of health. Understanding women's bodies will also combat stigma and myths associated with normal biological processes such as menstruation.

FEMM knows that hormones are essential to reproductive and overall women's health. Ovulation is the sign of health in women because it is the proof of sufficient hormone levels in the 9 essential hormones that influence women's health. FEMM teaches women to understand this information and the signs that this presents in their

body. In this way, women using FEMM are able to identify abnormalities as they arise, seek health treatment when necessary, and ensure that their symptoms or complaints are not dismissed.

FEMM also enables women to make informed choices about family planning. There is a right to adequate family planning and information about reproductive and sexual health that is accurate and respects cultural, religious, and ethical beliefs. Programs focused on providing commodities often fail to ensure that women have the education needed to understand their bodies and what they are using and may not always respect values. Commodities also run out, whereas knowledge, once acquired, is there to stay, and can be shared freely.

Information-based health education and medical care is uniquely well suited to meet these needs while respecting individual choices and values. FEMM offers reproductive and hormonal education and helps women to understand the way various family planning methods work and their potential side effects. It educates women about the science of their bodies, how to identify when they are fertile, and how to achieve or avoid pregnancy.

FEMM has also developed an app to help women take control of their health. The FEMM App is available free of charge. It is now available in English and Spanish and on both Apple and Android devices, making it available to more women around the world, with many new downloads coming from women in developing countries. Women who use the FEMM App can track their observations and symptoms to better understand their bodies and health. Just as each woman is different, so are her observations and experiences, which is why the App is completely customizable. Women can track as much or as little as they like, and add symptoms and observations. It also provides insights into what a woman is experiencing in her cycle, and can flag potential health concerns and connect women with medical professionals for treatment.

Women and girls also need good healthcare to meet their needs when they do identify health concerns. FEMM's Medical Management program trains doctors to diagnose and treat reproductive health problems, with a holistic view of a woman's body that incorporates recent research on the complex hormonal interactions between different body systems. This interaction, and the delicacy of the hormonal activity in a woman's body, is essential to the experience of health in the entire female body. FEMM has developed innovative protocols that allow doctors to identify underlying problems with precision and treat them effectively. This medical support provides treatments that help women to live healthy lives.

FEMM is low-cost and meets the underlying needs of women. Comprehensive health care for women can now be provided through basic health delivery systems, making this approach to women's health more effective, cheaper to deliver, and providing better health outcomes. This makes FEMM a sustainable way of incorporating advanced endocrinological care into healthcare infrastructures. By incorporating this care into other efforts, we can ensure that women and girls get the care they deserve and which will help them participate fully in their communities.

Women and girls' equality and empowerment requires the investment in women's health and health education. Women's healthcare has often failed to meet women's needs. We know that informed decisions lead to healthier decisions, and that women play a key role in family and community health outcomes. Through FEMM's innovative programs, women and girls will take charge of their health, empowering them to reach their potential and build a world where gender equality is realized. We call on the Commission to ensure that authentic health care is included in social protection systems and public services, and we are ready to help.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/114

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20310 (E) 071218

Please recycle

Statement

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas welcome the opportunity to address the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women with priority theme, 'Social Protection Systems, Access to Public Services and Sustainable Infrastructure for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls.' This priority theme brings to the forefront Sustainable Development Goal five and highlights in particular, Sustainable Development Goal one, four, six, eight, nine, ten, and eleven. In order to address gender inequalities and empower women and girls, policies must recognize their diversity and not treat them as a homogenous group. In this statement, we draw attention to rural women and girls who are disproportionately impacted by exclusion from social protection systems, lack of access to public services, and lack of sustainable infrastructure.

Social protection floors are a human right creating pathways for other human rights. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognizes social protection floors as sets of basic social security guarantees which those in need have access to over their life cycle. This includes, at minimum, essential health care and basic income security. Despite their significance, according to a recent ILO data estimates, comprehensive social protection systems are not accessible to three-quarters or 71 per cent of the global population. We know that women are disadvantaged due to gender inequalities and make up the large percentage of the unprotected. States' failure to provide this bare minimum compromises women and girls' capacity to make meaningful contributions to their societies.

As Sisters of Mercy working globally with women and girls on the ground, we have learned that exclusion from vital social protection policies such as income security, education and employment opportunities, make them vulnerable to exploitation, especially human trafficking. Due to their lack of access to education, women and girls are often marginalized and fall prey to trafficking. As highlighted in our recently published anti-human trafficking advocacy handbook "Inherent Dignity", preventing these and other exploitations of women and girls requires addressing the underlying causes, including their exclusion from social protection floors, lack of access to education, and job opportunities.

We join UN-Women in claiming that the exclusion of women and girls from social protection systems combined with lack of access to public services and sustainable infrastructures perpetuate gender inequalities. In most societies, due to cultural and social gender norms, the burden of unpaid child care and domestic duties fall on women and girls, which restrict them from engaging in education, formal employment and government. The burden on rural women and girls is compounded due to lack of critical infrastructures like paved roads, safe and affordable public transportation, and easily accessible water. They expend lots of time and energy and risk their safety walking long distances on undeveloped roads to collect water, which is often non-potable. Therefore, it is critical that States empower women by fulfilling their human right to water, and other critical infrastructures to ensure their right to an adequate standard of living.

We are concerned that lack of access to childcare forces women to enter the informal sector, where they are often excluded from contributory social protection systems. Sustainable Development Goal target 5.4 calls for a recognition of "the value of unpaid care and domestic work through provisions of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies," and greater gender equality in the division of these works. It is imperative that States create social protection policies that put economic value to unpaid care and domestic duties. When States provide accessible and affordable child care, they are making a valuable investment. This enables women to

participate in the labour market, tapping into their economic potential and empowering them to be self-sufficient and valued leaders in their societies.

Social protection programmes that fail to take into account the various barriers to access continue to marginalize rural women and girls. For instance, lack of access to a safe and affordable public transportation means rural women cannot travel far to register and receive social protection programmes. Lack of educational opportunities for rural women and girls often means illiteracy which makes it difficult for them to understand complicated application processes. Additionally, lack of public services like accessible and affordable child care often means that women cannot take advantage of job training programmes. The 2030 Agenda offers integrative approaches for States to address these inequalities in their national policies.

Social protection policies like cash transfers seek to alleviate income insecurity and provide the funds necessary for basic health care needs and educational opportunities for children. However, we reject cash transfer programmes that are designed in a way that reinforce harmful gender norms. For instance, when conditional cash transfer programmes impose requirements on women to take their children to receive vaccinations, it places the burden solely on women who are often faced with inaccessibility of public services and infrastructures. We must eliminate these conditionalities that continue to perpetuate harmful gender norms. It is however important that cash transfers are given specifically to women because in some cultures they do not have access to household financial resources and are not allowed to participate in financial decision-making.

Furthermore, research has found that cash transfer programmes are not sufficient for comprehensively addressing women's exclusion from social protection systems. These programmes alone fail to move beyond addressing the immediate material needs of women and girls. Empowering women requires providing cash transfer as well as job training programmes, whereby they can receive skills that are in demand in the labour market. These programmes view women as active participants. We must deconstruct gender norms and see women as equal contributors to the workforce.

To conclude, The Sisters of Mercy across the globe insist that women and girls be recognized and valued for their inherent dignity and contributions to a sustainable world. This implies that they must be active participants in the development, implementation and review phase of social protection, infrastructure, and public service programmes.

Recommendations

The interconnectedness of social protection, sustainable infrastructure and public services cannot be underestimated. Therefore, we call on Member States to:

- Recognize comprehensive social protection measures as a human right for all.
- Implement social protection measures that take into account the public service and infrastructure barriers that burden women and girls.
- Adopt a holistic approach to the 230 Agenda, recognizing the interconnectedness of all the Sustainable Development Goals for the empowerment of women and girls, specifically noting Sustainable Development Goal one, four, five, six, eight, nine, ten, and eleven.
- Empower women and girls by implementing sustainable infrastructures, including accessible, safe and affordable public transportation systems, and clean and accessible water.

- Provide public services, including accessible and affordable child care and health care facilities. Additionally, implement Sustainable Development Goal target 5.4 by placing an economic value to unpaid child care and domestic work.
- Integrate a review and monitoring mechanisms for social protection, public service and infrastructure programmes, to ensure that their designs do not reinforce harmful gender norms.
- Ensure that women and girls are active participants in the development, implementation, and review of social protection programmes.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/115

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by AARP, AGE Platform Europe, African Women's Development & Communication Network (FEMNET), Ageing Nepal, Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary, Equality Now, Global Fund for Widows, Gray Panthers, Guild of Service, HelpAge International, Instituto Qualivida, International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care, Inc., International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing, International Council on Social Welfare, International Federation on Ageing, International Longevity Center Global Alliance, Ltd., International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, National Association of Community Legal Centres Inc., The National Old Folks of Liberia, Inc., Widows Rights International, Widows for Peace through Democracy, Women for Human Rights and single women group, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20314 (E) 101218

Please recycle

Statement

Multiple Discrimination, Intersecting Inequalities and Social Protection for Older Women

The empowerment of women and girls is essential for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, and for this to be achieved their needs, rights and preferences at every stage of their lives must be met.

Although gender equality and women's empowerment are increasingly prominent themes on the international policy agenda, the diverse experiences, needs and rights of older women have not been fully considered and there is a risk that these efforts will fail as a result.

This statement examines global trends, challenges and opportunities in ensuring older women's human right to income security through adequate and rights-based social protection.

The statement calls to attention how economic, social, cultural and gender-specific processes effect the accumulation of assets and liabilities over a life-course, which largely determine the status of older people. These processes often result in women arriving at older age with few economic, social and cultural assets to call upon, resulting in urgent need for adequate social protection for older women.

The statement briefly examines how social protection systems in many countries have been designed around a male breadwinner model, assuming an uninterrupted and full-time career in the formal economy. This penalises women, who spend disproportionally more time than men in the informal economy and shoulder most unpaid care, resulting in substantially lower coverage rates and benefit levels.

Recognizing the gendered nature of life-courses and the inadequate coverage provided to older women by many social protection systems around the world, the statement concludes with recommendations on how to design and implement gender-transformative social protection systems that can mitigate and redress accumulated inequalities throughout the life-course.

Population Ageing and Demographic Transition

The global population aged 60 years or over numbered 962 million in 2017. In 2050, there will be more older persons aged 60 or over than adolescents and youth at ages 10–24.

As the average age of populations continues to rise, Governments should implement policies to capitalize on opportunities and mitigate risks of population ageing, while addressing the needs and rights of older persons, including those related to labour markets, health and care systems, social protection.

Recognizing these demographic changes and proactively enacting policies to adapt to an ageing population will be essential in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and 'leaving no one behind'. However, such policies will only be successful if they consider the needs, rights and preferences of women throughout their life-course.

Social Protection for Older Women: Gendered Life-course and Pension Design

Women live longer than men but are less likely to enjoy income security and economic independence in older age. Because of a lifetime of economic disadvantage and discrimination, older women end up with lower incomes and few assets to help them maintain an adequate standard of living in older age.

Throughout their life, women and men are exposed to different risks and disadvantages, which are often specific to their gender and related to gendered inequalities or discrimination. Inequalities in older age stem from the accumulation of multiple and interconnected disadvantages, discrimination, inequalities and denial of rights that women experience across the life-course, such as education and wage differentials; culturally-specific gendered work norms; gendered productive and reproductive roles; mobility constraints and a lack of voice and agency.

While women are more likely to live in poverty at all ages, in older age the difference is more significant. Women also tend to live longer than men, are more likely to be widowed and living alone. Women are also less likely to be able to rely on savings and earned income in older age, as they often have shorter work histories, less formal education and training, spend more time in informal and low-paid employment, shoulder most unpaid care responsibilities, and face persistent discrimination.

A common perception is that, as older people withdraw from the labour force, families take the primary responsibility for their financial and material support. However, this support is often irregular, limited and excludes many. A 2017 study by HelpAge International finds that, while a significant amount of older people receive support from their children, the support is often inadequate to ensure income security in older age.

Old-age pensions are the main policy instrument to ensure income security in older age, but pension systems currently do not provide adequate coverage for most of the world's older people and often fail to produce equal outcomes for women and men. According to the International Labour Organisation (2019), at global level 68 per cent of older people receive a pension but only 20 per cent in most low-income countries. Women are less likely than men to receive a pension at all, and if they do, they have considerably lower benefits. Even in countries where women enjoy broad access to pensions, their benefit levels are often only a fraction of men's.

These gender pension gaps are the result of intersecting and cumulative discrimination and inequalities that affect women throughout their lives and are reinforced by inappropriately designed pension systems.

The close link between contributory pensions and labour markets means that contributory pensions tend to replicate inequalities and exacerbate the discrimination that women experience throughout their lives. During their working years, women participate less in the labour market, earn lower wages and interrupt their careers more often than men to care for dependents. Women are also over-represented in informal and precarious work. In low and lower-middle income countries, a higher proportion of women are in informal employment than men. Women are further over-represented in part-time work, not only impacting their ability to make pension contributions but also on their lifetime earning potential. Finally, there is also a significant gap between men and women's pay, which is the most significant in developing countries, and increases with age.

In short, pension design matters for gender equality in older age. The conditions for entitlement, the links between benefits and past earnings, elements of redistribution, the provision for widows, indexation and retirement age all impact on gender inequality in older age.

Social Pensions as Gender-transformative Social Protection in Older Age

Government financed social pensions are detached from assumptions about continuous participation in paid formal sector employment and therefore more accurately reflect the gendered nature of the life-course. They play a key role in

ensuring that women can access at least a basic pension and enjoy a minimum standard of living in older age.

Although social pensions cannot be expected to reverse years of discrimination, detaching pension entitlements from labour markets ensures that accumulated inequalities are not transferred into the pension system. Social pensions can also address gender and age specific risks, such as a widow's loss of assets or child care responsibilities, particularly in skipped generation households. They can also be an effective way of recognising the value of women's non-remunerated work. Social pensions are therefore a more gender equitable way of achieving income security in older age, and are particularly important in contexts with high informality and low pension coverage.

While more research is needed, social pensions clearly benefit older women, as well as older men. Most research into the impact of social pensions does not take gender into account. Instead research often looks at the impact on households, which is problematic as it ignores important intra-household dynamics. In general, research finds that cash social pensions have a positive impact on both men and women's wellbeing and poverty.

Recommendations for Members States to Strengthen Social Protection for Older Women

A package of measures is needed to address the root causes of gender gaps in old age pensions over the life-course, particularly with regards to gender inequalities in education, employment and care. The following recommendation focus on closing the pension gap and realizing older age income security for older women through social protection.

- Member States should prioritize non-contributory tax-financed social pensions to expand coverage and reduce gender gaps: Governments should prioritize the implementation of non-contributory tax-financed social pensions to expand coverage and reduce gender gaps. A focus on extending contributory schemes, while important, fails to provide an alternative for women who are not considered 'workers' at all because they engage in unpaid care and domestic work.
- Member States should implement social pensions on a universal basis to effectively reach all older women: Social pensions that are either offered to all are the most effective in reaching all older women, including those who re living in poverty and are marginalized. Universal social pensions bolster women's economic autonomy, strengthen their voice and agency within households and raise their social status. In contrast, means-tested pensions often require that household — rather than individual — income fall below a certain threshold, which can exclude women who live in households above this threshold even if they have no personal income. In effect, they assume that income from cohabiting spouses or other family members will be shared fairly, which is not always the case. Other barriers that come with targeting of pensions can impede women's access, including lower levels of literacy, lack of information or identification documents and distance to facilities.
- Member States should guarantee adequate benefit levels of social pensions to ensure income security for older women: To the extent that older women rely more heavily on non-contributory pensions than men, the adequacy of these benefits is of major concern from a gender equality perspective. The adequacy also needs to be maintained over time through proper indexation, which is important for women, as they tend to live longer than men.

- Member States should address gender-biased rules in contributory schemes: Gender-responsive pension reform should aim to improve women's status in contributory pensions and include compensatory measures addressing gendered life-course inequalities, such as maternity and care-related contribution credits.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/116

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by WePower — Women's Electoral Power for the Advancement of Women's Leadership in Israel (R.A.), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20317 (E) 101218

Please recycle

Statement

WePower's Ad-Hoc Coalition to Advance Women Candidates in Israel's October 30, 2018 Municipal Elections — Taking the Initiative, Providing Access to Services and Working Effectively to Narrow the Gender Gap in Political Leadership

Equal representation of women in local politics and governance is vital to achieve gender equality. WePower is implementing new and alternative approaches to strengthen women's participation in elections, in order to change the low representation rate of women in local governance, and to increase the active participation of women in municipal processes.

WePower, a leading non-profit, non-partisan Israeli Non-governmental organisation proactively promoting women's leadership in the highest echelons of decision-making and in elected positions, aims to advance women's leadership and gender mainstreaming in all levels of society, especially in the political and public arenas, and change the under-representation of women both at the national and local levels.

In 2017, WePower launched an unprecedented initiative, to create and lead an ad-hoc coalition to change the gender gap in the upcoming October 30th, 2018 Israel Municipality Elections, in partnership with the major women's organizations in Israel. The coalition's name is "Local 2018". As Election Day approaches, over 25 organizations are still working together under our leadership, full strength, to help all women candidates run successfully for the municipal offices of their choice.

The following are some of Local 2018 and WePower's activities towards the upcoming elections and their effect on advancing women candidates thus far:

- The Local 2018 coalition of over 25 organisations headed by WePower made training and mentoring for the October 2018 Israeli municipal elections accessible to women candidates, both physically and financially, regardless of their location. The coalition provided women with courses on politics and leadership (including online, for those at faraway locations) for very reasonable prices; free advice and consultations, including information on available government services; connections to form a network of peers; and assignment of mentors with experience in the political and instructional fields, who volunteer their time and efforts to support and advise women candidates on a one-on-one basis, even in distant locations.

- In addition, the Coalition is in touch with Israel's female members of Parliament and arranged for events, for the running candidates to participate in and see Israeli women who currently serve in political and public offices, such as Parliament events for the International Woman's Day. Furthermore, the Coalition itself holds periodic meetings for updates and exchange of information between the member organizations, in order to maximize the results and effectiveness of the joint work and activities.

- The Local 2018 coalition drafted a Pledge Calling for Gender-Equal Municipal Elections. Dozens of mayors, heads of parties' lists and Knesset (Israeli Parliament) members signed the Local 2018 pledge.

- As a first step, with the support of the Israeli Authority for the Advancement of Gender Equality, the Coalition held conferences and turned personally to women, to encourage them to run. Later on, Local 2018 held a campaign directed at the voters, to ask them to support women candidates, while also

demanding from the heads of political parties and heads of the parties' lists to include as many women candidates as men — a campaign for "Equal Lists".

– WePower and Local 2018 took the initiative in their hands to provide essential services, which are not accessible through, or supplied by, Israel's public or social services, but are in fact necessary for any candidate's successful and competitive elections campaign. We continue to do so in the hope that, as the number of women in government grow, so will the provision for these services, as there is recognition of the importance to afford access to them.

WePower embraces the goal of narrowing the gender gap to 50/50 by 2030 and works on the field, providing services, supporting change and strengthening the sustainable infrastructure for gender equality.

– It is WePower's belief that sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and empowerment of women MUST include education for women who consider, aspire or run for political or public office, but who do not have the necessary background, networking environments, tools or experience in the politics and processes of a campaign for the public office they may wish to seek.

WePower provides instruction, tools and training, provides platforms for networking following training, and even mentoring from experienced former women candidates to political and public offices. For the upcoming elections, in addition to heading Local 2018, WePower also attended dozens of conferences and seminars, as well as special events in Israel's Parliament (Knesset), to raise consciousness about the importance of running for office. We also held numerous seminars for women election candidates in regional councils, as the goal of the day was to provide them with the opportunity to network, exchange know-how about the election process in regional councils and learn from the experience of others. In addition, our flagship "Women for Future Leadership" program was held in a north location (Haifa), a central location (Modiin) and a southern Israel location (Ramat Negev), to ensure that all women aspiring for leadership, including in the upcoming elections in Israel, have access to attend. We also held follow-up programs for several groups of WePower graduates from previous years.

In preparation for the municipal elections, WePower also continued the "College for Politics" program, targeted specifically at women who are interested in running for the elections, by providing them with the know-how and tools to conduct a political campaign. Moreover, this past May WePower opened additional sessions of this program, which were also provided to participants online via WebInR. A total of 80 women participated in the College for Politics program. Most importantly, a majority of the program's participants announced that they will consider running in the upcoming elections for positions such as Mayor, Head of a Candidate Party List, Council Member or representative of regional councils in plenaries.

– The results are speaking for themselves — 40 per cent of this year's graduates and 12 per cent of the last 5 years' graduates of WePower's programs are in fact running for office in the upcoming October elections.

Women must be reached, encouraged, trained and supported (even in isolated regions) to seek decision-making positions, which in turn will empower them to help others, and thus bridge the gender gap. Access to the services which help empower women to be able to run for office on an equal footing with men is therefore crucial, if we realistically strive to narrow the gap. Only such an empowered woman can come to elections from a position of knowledge, experience, support and belief in public service. She will also know, once elected, how to make women's needs a priority and a part of relevant government and public sustainable development agendas.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/117

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20319 (E) 101218

Please recycle

Statement

Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors Statement

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors consists of more than 100 civil society organisations, non-governmental organizations and Trade Unions from all parts of the world, united in their motivation to realize social protection for all.

Intersecting Inequalities and Social Protection for Women

The empowerment of women and girls of all ages is essential for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, and for this to be achieved their needs, rights and preferences at every stage of their lives must be considered.

Although gender equality and women's empowerment are increasingly prominent themes on the international policy agenda the diverse experiences and needs of women across the life course must be fully considered and women's human rights to income security through adequate and rights-based social protection need to be ensured.

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors therefore calls to the attention how social protection systems in many countries do not reach most workers, especially those in informal employment. Social protection systems have been designed around a male breadwinner model, assuming an uninterrupted and full-time career in the formal economy. This tends to penalise women, who are lower paid, disproportionately represented in precarious and informal work, and shoulder most unpaid care, resulting in substantially lower coverage rates and benefit levels.

Economic, social, cultural and gender-specific processes moreover affect the accumulation of assets and liabilities over a life-course, and ultimately social security entitlements. These intersecting inequalities often result in women arriving at older age with few economic, social and cultural assets to call upon, resulting in an urgent need for adequate social protection.

Recognising the gendered nature of life-courses and the inadequate coverage by many social protection systems around the world, the Global Coalition has set out recommendations on how to design and implement gender-responsive social protection systems that can mitigate and redress accumulated inequalities throughout the life-course.

The statement emphasises the importance of ensuring universal coverage in social protection schemes, in line with ILO standards. It stresses the need to guarantee adequate, comprehensive social protection floors, extend social protection schemes to workers in the informal economy and to those unable to work, and address gender bias within these schemes. The development of, and public investment in gender-responsive quality public services such as child care, health care and elder care services, is moreover essential.

Finally, a strategy to address gender inequalities in social protection must also include concerted action to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market and enable the transition from the informal to the formal economy as per ILO Recommendation 204.

Gendered Life-Courses and Social Protection Design

Gender gaps in social protection are the result of discriminatory, intersecting and cumulative inequalities that affect women throughout their lives and are being reinforced by a gender bias in the design of social protection systems.

Throughout their life women and men are exposed to different risks and vulnerabilities, which are often specific to their gender and related to gendered inequalities or discrimination. These inequalities stem from the accumulation of multiple and interconnected disadvantages, discrimination, inequalities and denial of rights that women experience across the life-course, such as education and wage differentials; women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work which limits their access to paid and decent work, culturally-specific gendered work norms; gendered productive and reproductive roles; mobility constraints and a lack of voice and agency. Because of a lifetime of economic disadvantage, particularly in the labour market, women end up with lower incomes, fewer assets and lower or no social security entitlements — ultimately exposing them to a higher risk of poverty.

The disproportionate share of unpaid care work done by women significantly affects their social protection entitlements. Globelly, women undertake 76 per cent of all unpaid care work. Women often interrupt their careers, work shorter hours, take on flexible and informal work, and remain outside the labour market altogether due to care responsibilities. Women are overrepresented in informal and precarious work. Women are paid less compared to men for doing work of equal value. Therefore, women's contributions to social security systems are significantly lower than men's, leading women to experience lower coverage rates and substantially lower benefit levels.

Gender differences in social security are particularly acute within contributory sysiems. Women are less likely than men to receive a pension, and if they do, they have considerably lower benefits. Even in countries where women enjoy broad access to pensions, their benefit levels are often only a fraction of men's.

Similarly, non-contributory social protection instruments, even when specifically aimed at women or girls such as conditional cash transfers, sometimes do not produce positive impact in terms of social and economic empowerment. On the contrary they might increase the care burden for women and reinforce gendered division of care and domestic work in the household. Moreover, they are mostly directed at extremely poor women and girls, and do not address the needs and vulnerabilities of women more broadly.

While gendered labour market and life course patterns lie at the roots of women's disadvantage in social protection systems, their impact can be magnified or mitigated by specific features of social security design. The conditions for entitlement, the links between benefits and past earnings, elements of redistribution, and the provision for widows and divorcees and indexation and retirement age all impact on gender inequality, especially in older age. For instance, the close link between contributory pensions and labour markets means that contributory pensions tend to replicate inequalities that women experience throughout their lives.

The existence of adequate, survivors' benefits as well as non-contributory social protection benefits, including social pensions, all play an important role in ensuring that women can access at least a basic pension and enjoy a minimum standard of living in old age. Non-contributory benefits can also be an effective way of recognising the value of women's non-remunerated work within the household and community.

Finally, a lack of quality, gender-responsive public services including childcare and long-term care for dependent relatives exacerbate unequal distributions of care work to the detriment of women's labour and social protection entitlements. Lack of care services, unaffordability, poor accessibility and low quality have all been shown to present significant barriers.

Recommendations for Members States to Strengthen Social Protection for Women

A package of measures is needed to address the root causes of gender gaps over the life-course, particularly with regards to gender inequalities in education, employment and care.

- Members States should ensure adequate, comprehensive social protection systems in line with ILO Convention 102 on Social Security and ILO Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors. In this regard, they should extend social protection floors, including social pensions, child benefits, paid maternity leave and survivors' benefits through a complementary mix of non-contributory, contributory and tax-based schemes.
- Members States should address gender-biased rules in contributory schemes, which disproportionately disadvantage women. Harmful rules such as long vesting periods in pension system should be phased out. In addition, reforms should include compensatory measures addressing gendered life-course inequalities, such as adequately crediting periods of care to address the unequal sharing of unpaid care.
- Members States should ensure adequate benefit levels of social protection benefits, including non-contributory benefits, to ensure income security for women. To the extent that older women rely more heavily on non-contributory pensions than men, the adequacy of these benefits is of major concern from a gender equality perspective.
- Members States should ratify and implement ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection. Safeguarding the health of expectant and nursing mothers and protecting them from job discrimination is a precondition for achieving genuine equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women at work. Moreover, paid parental leave for both women and men can allow for a more equal distribution of work and care responsibilities.
- Member States should support the development of gender-responsive quality public services and sustainable infrastructure including through the creation and formalization of jobs and enhancing pay and conditions in the care sector, and ensuring access to affordable and quality health services, childcare and long-term care and quality public education.
- Member States should take measures to address women's lower pay, job insecurity and underrepresentation in formal work, which ultimately reflect in lower social protection entitlements. This includes active labour policies, supporting the transition to the formal economy, and tackling the gender pay gap.
- Member States should take appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures to address harmful social and cultural practices in the context of gender roles.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/118

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20320 (E) 10/218

Please recycle

Statement

Statement of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. on Human Trafficking Education and Training Initiatives

Human trafficking is a scourge that disproportionately affects women and girls around the globe. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., has taken a stand against human trafficking and commits to leveraging its resources to increase awareness and promote advocacy among members and the communities we serve. The organization has embarked upon an educational campaign to help members and communities understand:

- What human trafficking involves;
- The human and social impact locally and globally;
- How to identify signs of illegal activity and/or possible victims;
- Reporting and referral options and opportunities;
- How to develop partnerships with local experts, law enforcement and elected and appointed officials to support development of policy and legislation to mitigate and, in time, eradicate human trafficking in our communities.

With more than 500 undergraduate and graduate chapters in 37 states and international chapters in the Bahamas, Bermuda, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Canada, Germany and Korea, we are mobilizing our members and are committing the resources of our Social Action Committee and Golden Alerts — a Sigma Gamma Rho communication that mobilizes our membership to address social inequities. The Golden Alert raises a call to action and provides a toolkit that gives members training, guidance and templates to effectively execute public meetings, workshops and town halls; engage in peaceful protest; and foster and support informed legislative action.

During our biennial public meeting this summer in Dallas, the Social Action Committee organized a Golden Alert panel discussion on human trafficking. Giving voice and context to this topic were representatives from: U.S. Department of Homeland Security; the mental health professional; Dallas County (Texas) Police Department; and a member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., and parent of a human trafficking victim.

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., has a strong tradition of affecting change by engaging its members and partners to address issues of import. Our highly successful partnership efforts include:

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on its Act Against AIDS (A3) Leadership Initiative that yielded an innovative training model, A3 (Ask, Accept, Act) for Life HIV/AIDS Prevention.

- We host free HIV/AIDS testing at regional and international sorority meetings.
- Hosted a train the trainer session as a parallel event for the 62nd Commission on the Status of Women conference. The session had approximately 60 attendees.
- More than 2,500 members receive training annually.
- To-date, 80,000 community members in 31 states in America, Canada, the Caribbean and South Korea received training from 172 trainers.
- Earned 10 million HIV/AIDS prevention and education media impressions.

- 300,000 received email communication on HIV/AIDS prevention email messages.
- Held more than 400 community events and one international event.
- The train-the-trainer model and outreach strategy has been adapted for other Center for Disease Control partner initiatives.

USA Swimming and Sigma Gamma Rho's Swim 1922 partnership is 6 years old. The initiative has been shown to have reduced drowning rates in the African American community in the United States by five per cent since its inception. The program hosts free swim clinics to promote overall health and wellness, in addition to promoting water safety. Each year we average nearly 120 swim clinics across the United States, impacting more than 20,000 adults and youth.

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.'s mission since its founding in 1922 has been to enhance the quality of life for women and their families in the United States and globally through community service, civil, and social action. We look forward to establishing partnerships with other non-governmental organisations to expand our efforts to increase awareness to end human trafficking. Our membership stands at the ready to work toward the day when all women and their families are able to reach their full potential and realize unlimited opportunities.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/119

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20322 (E) 101218

Please recycle

Statement

Challenges for Women Empowerment: Lack of Public Services and Social Protection Systems

Women empowerment signifies liberation of women from the vicious clutches of social, political, economic and gender-based discrimination. It denotes women having the freedom to take decisions and make life choices.

Various international and national landmark steps have been taken to empower women such as the inclusion of 'Women Empowerment' as one of the prime goals in the eight Millennium Development Goals. Goal three of the Millennium Development Goals unequivocally calls for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

India is the only country where ironically women are worshipped as goddesses and has one of the worst records on treatment of girls and women. Further, India is the only country where Three-Tier system of democracy — three levels of government — has been legally adopted. The third-tier, federalism, is local level governance in the form of Panchayats (Rural level) and Municipalities (Urban level) which was adopted by the enactment of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. All the local elected bodies reserve one-third of their seats for women which has been recently increased to 50 per cent in 80 per cent of the states in India. Such provisions have been made to increase the effective participation of women in politics.

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2017, India ranked 108, closing 67 per cent of its gender gap based on the four pillars that the World Economic Forum measures — education, workplace, health and political representation. Economic participation and health are India's greatest challenges.

There is no argument that women in India have made a considerable progress since independence, however, they continue to struggle against many social evils in the male-dominated, patriarchal society.

The Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID) has been engaged in analysing women empowerment issues, since its inception, on various parameters like reproductive health, education, employment. It has also been evaluating various government schemes on women empowerment. The results are circulated among government officials and bureaucrats. The Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development has also been disseminating the findings by holding seminars, conferences and publishing the studies in Journals or in the form of books. These publications have been widely circulated in India and abroad.

This presentation shares with the stakeholders the findings of some of the surveys, studies, publications of the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, focusing on the challenges to Women's empowerment, which need to be bridged for sustainable development. The problems are more acute among the vulnerable and marginalized sections i.e. poor, scheduled castes, tribal women. Poor implementation of government schemes, lack of social protection policies and infrastructure adds to women's low status in a patriarchal society like India.

The paper published by Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development entitled 'Women Empowerment: Gendered Dynamics in Indian Punjab' analysed the various aspects of empowerment and concluded that high levels of development did not decipher into empowerment of women. Moreover, male domination and rigid socio-cultural environment perpetuates her deprived status. The study suggested female education and constant reconditioning programs on gender equality at the household level to rip off the deep-rooted social beliefs on son preference.

Another study 'Accessibility of Toilets among Scheduled Castes in Rural Punjab: Issues and Challenges' highlighted lack of services and brought out that despite massive programmes on sanitation in the country, access to latrines remains a major challenge in rural areas, especially among the marginalized sections of society. Women and girls were found to be more vulnerable. In spite of 'Swachh Bharat Mission' launched by the Prime Minister of India to achieve the vision of 'Clean India' and universal sanitation coverage, the unhygienic traditional practice of open defecation continues to remain the major option for many females. Scheduled Caste women and girls voiced multiple menaces of open defecation like it being health hazardous, causing inconvenience (especially during night hours, among pregnant women and during rainy season), lack of privacy or security resulting in eve teasing and defecation site being a threat to their lives.

Study entitled 'Home-based work: The status of women hosiery workers in Ludhiana' analyses the women working in the informal sector of economy. The study was carried in Ludhiana city, commonly known as "hub of the Indian Hosiery Industry", where women are engaged in home-based production under the 'putting out' system. Home-based production denies women all benefits of collective action. They suffer from extreme hours of work, low wages, unsteady employment, no paid holidays, no maternity leaves and appalling work surroundings. The employers however enjoy tremendous advantages with partially no legislation defining women's rights. Being in the unorganized sector, women have no social protection and no political power and hence are exploited.

The results of the above-mentioned studies were submitted to the government bodies for necessary action and were also published in reputed journals for wider dissemination.

Study entitled 'Quality of Natal Care Services at Public Health Facilities in Punjab' rated the care received by women like diagnostic facilities (blood, stool and urine) and availability of free medicines from the health facilities as high. Further, availability of beds in the gynaecological ward, continuous supply of electricity and availability of medicines portrayed good quality of services yet cleanliness of toilets, non-availability of water in toilets and no curtains for maintaining privacy of mothers were adversely affecting the quality of services offered by these facilities. There was an acute shortage of specialists in these hospitals. The physical infrastructure like labour room, operation theatre, laboratory and pharmacy was satisfactory, but the use of ultrasound machine and radiographer needed improvement. The study identified the areas for quality improvement in natal care services offered at the public health facilities.

The findings were disseminated to government bodies at state and national level for quick action for filling the gaps.

The Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development has a Population Research Centre established by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, working continuously on the evaluation and field assessments of various schemes launched by centre and state government especially related to family welfare and Reproductive health care of women. A few amongst them are: Delivery Care Services in Punjab, Mahila Swasthya Sangh Scheme: An Evaluation, Impact of Janani Suraksha Yojana on Selected Health Behaviour in Punjab, Factors Contributing to Home Deliveries in Punjab.

The Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development is thus regularly contributing to the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare by identifying the gaps in the schemes, thereby enhancing their scope of improvement in future health schemes and public infrastructure for women.

Empowering Poor Tribal Girls under Corporate Social Responsibility: A Case Study of Nursing Colleges of SAIL at Bhilai and Rourkela

In order to improve the quality of life of tribal population in the State, the Government of India have introduced various development programmes including respective training institutes of steel plants of SAIL. Most of girls reported that training programme has helped them in raising their skill level, improve their aptitude and help them in job searching techniques. In fact, it is highly compatible with inclusive growth and make in India programme.

Such positive findings were disseminated to the government bodies and industrialists for replication elsewhere.

Access to Employment Sectors or Entrepreneurship among Women of Scheduled Castes (SC) Families in Rural Punjab

The study aimed to find out whether the Scheduled Castes women get opportunities for employment in government sector. The major findings are that Scheduled Castes women earn and contribute in their family income, although majority earn through unorganized work sectors, particularly by doing menial work in higher caste families. There are government schemes providing free education to Scheduled Castes girls' up to higher level of school education, but do not place them in employment sector even after the completion of diploma or degree courses.

The results were disseminated to government bodies at state and national level.

Overall, since the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development usually conducts research on government sponsored projects and collects both secondary and field based empirical data, all studies definitely have a strong connotation in policy planning. The studies by identifying the gaps in the present policies and their implementation contribute in strengthening the rights of women in the future policies being framed.

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/120

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by World Federation of Trade Unions, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20323 (E) 191218

Please recycle

Statement

It is a great joy to us, women unionists affiliated in the ranks of the big family of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), being here today, among women who travelled from every corner of the world in order to attend this annual date which has turned out to be a real institution by the United Nations.

This year's priority theme has a special importance, as it constitutes the very core of trade union action since the early steps of the union movement.

Before analysing our vision on how we can achieve an effective social protection system and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, it is worth taking a look at the situation of working women today, at a global level:

Nowadays, the working woman is the object of harsh exploitation. She works mainly in part-time, uninsured, and temporary jobs. She is being paid less than what men are paid. She has a smaller pension. She is the first to become unemployed and suffers the brutal consequences of unemployment. In many countries, violence against women is on the rise, prostitution is spreading, economic migration is separating many mothers from their children, their husbands and deprives them of the right to education, to cultural activity, to free time. All these are consequences of the so-called globalization, consequences that can't be overlooked or stay out of the context of today's debate.

According to the European Union statistical data (Eurostat), two thirds of the 800 million illiterate people globally today are women. Among the children that do not attend school, 3 out of 5 are girls. According to the same data, thirty one percent (31 per cent) of working women in Europe are employed in part-time positions.

The data also reveal that around one million people annually fall victim to sex trafficking, 900 thousand of whom are women and girls. The conditions for women are extremely bad in all continents. In Africa, AIDS is spreading among the female population, in India around two thousand pregnancies are being prematurely terminated daily, because families wish to have only male offspring. Around ninety percent (90 per cent) of the victims of the armed confrontations and wars are non-combatants, among them the large majority women and children.

These data and numbers speak for themselves. They reveal the true picture of the so-called "female issue". They highlight in the most blatant way that the problems we have to face not only they do not belong to the past, but they are still here, more present and acute than ever.

On social protection infrastructures

The debate on the social protection system and units is more timely and necessary than ever before, given that the offensive unleashed against our rights and the wave of large-scale privatizations, the dismantling of main social security infrastructures, the weakening of the right to free access to health for all or the deterioration of the -already poor- social solidarity infrastructures for unemployed and under-employed, all these phenomena cannot but be of concern for the working women population.

Especially now, in the 21st Century, when the wealth produced is even bigger, these infrastructures could be even more efficient, strengthened and on the level of the working woman's modern needs. On the contrary, even the existing scientific and technical knowledge for the possible improvement of the already existing infrastructures does not seem to interest the big corporate interests which develop

their activity on the social protection sectors. By contrast, the scientific and technical knowledge (often produced by public institutions and with funds that belong to all), is being shaped in order the exploitation of workers to be increased, creating more unemployment and immigration. This way, state infrastructures' role is being reduced to mere "bystanders" in the production and distribution of the wealth produced (for its concentration). At the same time, taxes are increased for those who work and live on the income of their work while pardons and tax incentives are granted to big businesses and capital transfer to tax havens is facilitated.

State funds are deliberately cut-off when it's about public services and state social functions of quality, universal and accessible to all. On the contrary, working people's money are destined to pay off a debt they have never created, "feeding" this way financial capital's greed for profit.

As a result, even more reactionary policies rise up, leading to the increase of military arms and the plundering of peoples' wealth-producing resources. The seeking of new energy routes and transport channels turns the situation even more dangerous for the people. On the other hand, trade union and political freedoms are dramatically restrained while fundamental social rights are being eliminated. The deny people their inalienable right to progress and social justice.

Thus, the dismantling of social protection systems can be analysed in the context of the above mentioned policies. Whatever should be public and a common property of everyone, now it is being privatized or dismantled. Workers and, especially the working women, are denied their basic right to essential goods as well as to healthcare, social security, education, housing, transport, justice, culture etc. Prices are rising, redundancies are increasing, recruitment is decreasing, degrading contracts and conditions of work and provision of services, closing down of services and establishments, quality and the rights of workers and users are reduced. The attack on the rights of Public Administration workers has a double effect, degrading their working and living conditions as well as the services and social functions provided. Denial of the right to employment, cuts in wages, freezing of careers, blocking collective bargaining and contracting, limitations on freedom of association and other collective rights – in particular the right to strike – increased working time and the proliferation of precariousness is detrimental to both workers and users.

As far as World Federation of Trade Unions is concerned, it struggles, uniting the voices of men and women workers in order to turn the tide, defending public social protection system services and the social protection infrastructures, against social injustice and on the benefit of people's rights.

That's why the World Federation of Trade Unions highlights on its agenda and inside women's movement the need for:

- Opposing the externalization and privatization of public services and social functions of the states;
- Advocating wage increases, reducing working hours and overall improvement of the working and living conditions of workers;
- Demanding the end of precariousness and the principle that every permanent job must correspond to an effective working link;
- Defending the maintenance and creation of jobs with rights and with quality;
- Defending trade union freedom and the right to collective bargaining and contracting;

- Rejecting charitable policies and advocating a fairer distribution of wealth through the creation or improvement of public services and social functions of states;
- Advocating the closure of all tax havens, as well as the so-called free trade agreements.

On gender equality and women's empowerment

How are we going to achieve gender equality while so much are still being written and told about it? How can all these demands mentioned above can promote woman's position in today's society?

On the basis of what has been outlined above, it becomes apparent that when we speak of the "female issue", we speak of the additional exploitation and the oppression that women endure from society as a result of their gender (that is, a combination of societal and gender discrimination). These discriminations have mental, cultural and moral repercussions, since women are prevented from developing their abilities in full and from attaining full equality. These negative repercussions mostly concern the working women, the poor peasants or the self-employed strata.

To us, the World Federation of Trade Unions, the solution and the way out is found in the common struggles of women and men for the improvement of their lives, taking into consideration the biological special needs of the women. And of course, this comes through social structures capable of defending motherhood, as a contemporary need of working mothers in the 21st century.

Specifically, what is needed is:

- Adequate pre and post-natal paid maternity leave. Banning of the dismissals of pregnant women. Parental leave with full healthcare and insurance. Banning of night-shifts and hazardous work for the women before and after giving birth.
- Decisive confronting of the unemployment rates through a development path that make use of the natural wealth-producing resources, the land and the industries to satisfy the working women needs all over the world.
- Free, public and qualitative Healthcare System that will take care of all the people of all the ages in any of their needs; vaccinations, regular HIV tests, proper medication for all the occasions.
- Free, public and qualitative Education System from the kindergarten to the university. An educational process that would make sure that people receive general knowledge and specialized education, to grow up and become an integrated personality utilizing fully its capabilities for the benefit of the society.
- Full-time, Stable job with dignified salaries. 7 hours a day, 5 days a week, 35 hours a week.
- Real and sufficient house subsidy or loans without interest for the young couples.
- A network of real free, public and qualitative services that will assist the family, the child, the elderly, the people with special needs, in order for the life of the woman to be improved. Free, public and qualitative kindergartens, old-homes, vacation facilities, restaurants at the working places.

Because it is only through a network like this that we will manage to empower women position in today's society. Because only in a society where all woman's needs are universally and essentially covered, today's women an be really free. This is when she is going to be able to become a decisive factor and "agent" of social progress on

the benefit of all. We must continue, also through this international stage, analyzing and discuss openly and vigorously. By exchanging our experience we also enrich our perception on what is happening in our respective countries. We must make proposals and set goals for the future of this Special Committee's activities.

We hope that this Conference will be one more step forward towards the analysis of the today's duties which will lead to woman's empowerment which ultimately can only be understood as the working woman's empowerment in society and for the society. Thank you very much"

United Nations E/CN.6/2019/NGO/121

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 November 2018

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Sixty-third session
11–22 March 2019
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Association of War-Affected Women, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), Global Fund for Widows, Graduate Women International (GWI), Gray Panthers, HelpAge International, International Council of Women, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Make Mothers Matter, Mama Zimbi Foundation, National Alliance of Women's Organizations, Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Limited, Tandem Project, The Widows Rights International, Widows for Peace through Democracy and Women for Human Rights, single women group, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20325 (E) 191218

Please recycle

Statement

Women for Human Rights, single women group (WHR) and the undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC, present for consideration by participants of the 63rd session of the United Nations (Commission on the Status of Women 63) the following statement:

Social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure has profound significance for widows of all ages, who in many countries are the poorest of the poor, and lack identification or support. Widows – young women, girls, and older women – are most in need of, but least able to access, social protection, pensions and other essential services that could ensure a decent life, and protect them and their children from extreme poverty, homelessness, marginalisation and violence.

In most countries and especially poorer countries, social protection systems give little or no consideration for widows. Very few widows receive a pension of any sort. There is overall a lack of firm data on widowhood, which will compromise implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals unless greater priority is given to the issue. This is very serious, given that, according to current estimates, which are likely to be an underestimate, there are more than 300 million widows worldwide, with 115 million living in extreme and chronic poverty.

There is, therefore, an urgent need to act to recognise the rights of widows to social protection, including pensions; to public services, including education and health; to recognition before the law and access to justice; and to shelter and housing. This 63rd Session provides an important opportunity to draw attention to widows' need for social protection in the form of pensions and basic income, which could do much to alleviate the poverty and misery which widows experience.

Widowhood, poverty, and access to pensions

Widowhood is a root cause of poverty across the generations, disadvantaging widows themselves and the children they have to feed, educate and care for – over 500 million children worldwide. All, irrespective of age, ethnicities, caste or class, have rights to social protection, security, and protection.

In developed countries, universal state pension systems cover most older widows, but very few middle and low-income countries and fragile conflict-affected states have systems of universal pensions, social protection and safety nets that could ensure widows of all ages a measure of income security.

Much of the literature and research on widowhood and pensions focuses on older widows. Access to social protection of younger bereaved women and girls is not well documented. This is a significant gap in evidence given that worldwide an estimated 10 per cent of women of marital age – who can be as young as 10 years old – are widows.

Widows in conflict-affected and developing countries lack access to the social protection of any sort. Millions live in extreme poverty and struggle to support themselves and their families. Informal and family systems of support are extremely unreliable and often harmful, with widows subject to exploitation, sexual abuse, and exclusion. Deceased husbands' property is very often appropriated by male relatives.

Harmful traditional practices expose widows to multiple acts of violence wherever they are. They can be exploited as secluded modern-day domestic, agricultural or sexual slaves, chased from the family plot of land and coerced into begging and prostitution in the community. Those who do this are often members of the dead husband's family.

Patriarchal attitudes to widowhood at many levels of decision-making deny widowed women and girls impartial justice to recover their rightful property, or defend themselves against such mourning and burial rites as "widow-inheritance, leverite and ritual cleansing".

Extreme poverty also fuels early marriage, since impoverished widows are unable to keep their daughters in school. Consequently, daughters are often given, sold, or trafficked to much older men, creating ever more child widows.

Effective social protection mechanisms, access to services and to legal protections could go some way to eliminate dangerous survival measures and violations of the right of widows.

Pensions

The majority of state pension systems depend on contributions from those working in the formal sector. Most women in developing countries, however, work in the informal sector and have no such provision. In the few developing countries that have instituted pensions for widows, eligibility may only start at ages over 50, thus leaving the many younger widows without any support.

The procedures for applying for state pensions disadvantage widows, especially younger illiterate rural widows, because they depend on formal documentation, birth, marriage and death certificates which they do not have nor support to obtain. Long and expensive distances to government offices, the inability to fill up forms, and the problems of communicating with strangers outside their villages deter many from seeking these benefits.

Data

The biggest barrier to widows accessing social support, benefits, and services in the absence of data on their numbers, ages, lifestyles, needs, roles, informal support systems and coping survival strategies. The injustices which consign millions of widows to poverty and exclusion cannot be tackled without better data on their lives, qualitative as well as quantitative. The data gap does not have to be addressed by means of expensive surveys – desirable as these may be – but can be filled, at least to begin with, by alternative methodologies involving the widows themselves, as best practice in mapping and profiling of widows in Nepal has demonstrated.

In India, one of the few developing countries with a universal pension scheme, the sums involved are so derisory that widows, even if aware of these benefits, may find it not worth the time and effort to navigate the bureaucracy and documentation needed to access them. Often, relying on male relatives to undertake the task of accessing the pension, widows find that it is they who end up receiving the pension. In Iraq, widows who are entitled to a pension, small though it may be, must be registered. In that country's years of uncertainty and violence, however, few widows have registered and even fewer receive pensions.

Non-governmental organizations and paralegals can facilitate access to state services and assist with documentation to ensure widows get the benefits they are entitled to. Non-governmental organizations, such as Women for Human Rights Single Women's Group in Nepal (WHR), the Self-Employed Women's Association in India (SEWA) Guild of Service in India (GoS), and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) in Bangladesh, have demonstrated "best practice" in securing widows', health care, scholarships for their children's education, legal aid, funeral expenses and life insurance. Their work has seen a decline in widows begging, daughters withdrawn from school for early marriage, and in prostitution. While widows in many countries may be dependent on non-governmental

organizations to support them, most success in accessing their rights comes when they are helped to establish their own organisations, as in Nepal and in Kenya where respectively the Women for Human Rights Single Women's Group (WHR) and the Ronan Foundation for Widows and Orphans ensure widows' voices are heard at decision-making committees so as to influence policies that can address their needs.

Conclusions and recommendations

The United Nations, its Member States, and the international community generally are urged to pay urgent attention to ensuring widows' rights to social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure, and for widows of all ages to be seen, counted and heard. Such action is essential for the achievement of all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

It is recommended that this Commission support

- A General Recommendation to States Parties on widowhood, which will ensure progress on access of widows to their right to social protection and to basic services, and that penal laws criminalise all harmful traditional practices.
- The visibility and encouragement for widows and their organisations to allow them to articulate their needs, be engaged in consultations relating to service delivery and in law reforms and their implementation.
- Concrete actions to fill the evidence gap on data on widows using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and the work of widows to document their situations.